

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMCONSUL TANGIER

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3307

AMEMBASSY MADRID

CINCUSNAVEUR

AMEMBASSY LONDON

USMISSION USUN

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

USCINCEUR

COMSIXTHFLT

FOSIF ROTA

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMCONSUL CASABLANCA

C O N F I D E N T I A L TANGIER 0047

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PBOR, SP, GI, ELAB, PGOV

SUBJECT: GIBRALTAR DEVELOPMENTS

REF: TANGIER 533

1. SUMMARY: THE DEATH OF GENERAL FRANCO HAS BROUGHT FRESH HOPE TO MANY GIBRALTARIANS FOR A RESOLUTION OF THEIR PROBLEMS WITH SPAIN. NO ONE EXPECTS DRAMATIC CHANGES IN THE NEAR FUTURE BUT GIBRALTARIANS HAVE BEEN ENCOURAGED BY SEVERAL DEVELOPMENTS THAT HAVE TAKEN PLACE OVER THE PAST FEW WEEKS. ON THE WAGE FRONT, NEGOTIATIONS ARE PROGRESSING SATISFACTORILY AND MAY BE CONCLUDED SOON--- POSSIBLY WITHIN THE NEXT MONTH OR TWO. A PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE CALLING FOR A CIVILIAN GOVERNOR REPORTEDLY IS OPPOSED BY LONDON AND WILL PROBABLY BE
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DROPPED. THE POLITICAL SCENE REMAINS QUIET THOUGH

WITH THE ASSEMBLY ELECTION ONLY SIX MONTHS AWAY,
POLITICAL ACTIVITY SHOULD PICK UP STEAM IN THE NEXT
FEW WEEKS. END SUMMARY.

2. THE SPANISH CONNECTION. GIBALTARIANS ARE HOPEFUL
THAT THE CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT IN SPAIN WILL LEAD TO A
NEW AND MORE FRIENDLY ERA IN GIBALTAR-SPANISH
RELATIONS. NO ONE ON GIBALTAR EXPECTS THE GIBALTAR-
SPANISH FRONTIER, CLOSED SINCE 1969, TO REOPEN SOON BUT
RESIDENTS OF THE ROCK HAVE BEEN HEARTENED BY SEVERAL
DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE DEATH OF FRANCO.

3. THE MOST DRAMATIC WAS THE TEMPORARY RESTORATION OF
TELEPHONE SERVICE BETWEEN GIBALTAR AND SPAIN DURING THE
CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR HOLIDAY PERIOD. THE TELEPHONE
LINES, I AM TOLD, WERE IN CONSTANT USE DURING THAT
PERIOD WITH TWO-THIRDS OF THE CALLS ORIGINATING IN
SPAIN. AT THE SAME TIME SPAIN MADE IT KNOWN THAT
PERSONS WITH PRIVATE BOATS WOULD BE ALLOWED TO VISIT
BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN GIBALTAR AND SPAIN DURING THE
HOLIDAYS. SEVERAL SPANIARDS TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THIS
CONCESSION TO SEE RELATIVES AND FRIENDS ON THE ROCK
THOUGH NO GIBALTARIANS APPEAR TO HAVE VISITED SPAIN.

4. JUST BEFORE THE HOLIDAYS THE BORDER WAS OPENED
FOR HUMANITARIAN REASONS TO PERMIT THE MEDICAL EVACUATION
TO GERMANY VIA GIBALTAR'S AIRPORT OF A GERMAN CITIZEN
CRITICALLY ILL IN ALGECIRAS. THIS IS THE FIRST TIME
IN FOUR YEARS THE BORDER HAS BEEN OPENED, THE LAST
OCCASION ALSO HAVING BEEN FOR HUMANITARIAN REASONS.

5. ANOTHER DEVELOPMENT CAME LATE IN JANUARY WHEN THE
SPANISH GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED THAT THE GIBALTAR PNG
LIST HAD BEEN ABOLISHED. THIS WAS ESTABLISHED SOME
YEARS AGO AND INCLUDED GIBALTARIANS AND OTHERS WHO,
OVER THE GIBALTAR ISSUE, WERE DECLARED PERSONAE NON
GRATA AND BANNED FROM VISITING SPAIN.

6. THESE DEVELOPMENTS, OF COURSE, ARE ALL STRAWS IN
THE WIND BUT THEY MAY REFLECT A SOMEWHAT MORE RELAXED
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ATTITUDE ON THE PART OF THE NEW SPANISH GOVERNMENT.
GIBALTARIANS ARE PLEASED, OF COURSE, BUT AT THE SAME
TIME CAUTIOUS ABOUT DRAWING ANY CONCLUSIONS FROM THESE
FAVORABLE SIGNS.

7. DURING MY VISIT TO THE ROCK LAST WEEK I FOUND
GIBALTARIANS CONCERNED THAT THEY BE INCLUDED IN ANY
NEGOTIATIONS OVER THEIR FUTURE THAT MAY TAKE PLACE

BETWEEN SPAIN AND BRITAIN. I DETECTED A CERTAIN NERVOUSNESS AMONG ORDINARY PEOPLE THAT THEY MIGHT BE LEFT OUT, THAT BRITAIN MIGHT NEGOTIATE OVER THEIR HEADS. A WELL PLACED GOVERNMENT SOURCE, HOWEVER, DOUBTED THAT THERE COULD BE ANY BILATERAL SETTLEMENT BETWEEN BRITAIN AND SPAIN OVER GIBRALTAR. HE FORESAW A SOLUTION DEVELOPING ONLY OVER A CONSIDERABLE PERIOD OF TIME---FIVE TO TEN YEARS AT LEAST---AND EVEN THEN ONLY IN MULTILATERAL TERMS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EEC OR NATO OR BOTH.

8. WAGE NEGOTIATIONS. GIBRALTAR'S WAGE NEGOTIATIONS, NOW MORE THAN TWO YEARS OLD, HAVE MOVED INTO THEIR FINAL STAGE. THE SCAMP RECOMMENDATIONS THAT GIBRALTAR'S WAGES BE GEARED TO THOSE PREVAILING IN BRITAIN AND ADJUSTED GRADUALLY TO EIGHTY PERCENT OF BRITISH WAGE SCALES HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED IN PRINCIPAL BY ALL PARTIES. THE NITTY GRITTY OF EQUATING JOBS ON GIBRALTAR WITH THOSE IN BRITAIN HAS PROVEN MORE TIME CONSUMING THAN ANYONE THOUGHT. SEVERAL SOURCES INDICATED TO ME, HOWEVER, THAT THE NEGOTIATIONS SHOULD BE COMPLETED BY EARLY MARCH. WHETHER THEY WILL BE DEPENDS TO A LARGE EXTENT ON WHETHER THE DOMINANT TRANSPORT AND GENERAL WORKERS UNION (TGWU) REALLY WISHES TO BRING THEM TO A SPEEDY CONCLUSION. SOME THINK THE TGWU WILL DELIBERATELY DRAG ITS HEELS IN ORDER TO USE THE WAGE NEGOTIATIONS AS A POLITICAL ISSUE IN NEXT SUMMER'S ELECTION. OTHERS, HOWEVER, THINK THEY WANT AN EARLY WAGE SETTLEMENT WHICH, TOGETHER WITH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF WAGE PARITY WITH BRITAIN, WOULD BE QUITE A POLITICAL TRUMP CARD IN THEIR HANDS.

9. THE CONSTITUTION. A COMMITTEE COMPOSED OF REPRESENTATIVES OF BOTH POLITICAL PARTIES WAS FORMED SOME-

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TIME AGO IN THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY TO DRAW UP PROPOSALS FOR CHANGES IN THE CONSTITUTION. THE DELIBERATIONS OF THIS COMMITTEE ARE NOT PUBLIC BUT IT IS WIDELY KNOWN THAT THE COMMITTEE HAS BEEN CONSIDERING WHETHER GIBRALTAR SHOULD HAVE A CIVILIAN GOVERNOR. THE GOVERNORSHIP TRADITIONALLY ROTATES AMONG THE MILITARY SERVICES, THE PRESENT INCUMBENT BEING AIR MARSHALL SIR JOHN GRANDY. A SOURCE CLOSE TO HIS OFFICE TOLD ME THE IDEA OF A CIVILIAN GOVERNOR IS NOT LOOKED UPON FAVORABLY BY HMG AND WOULD PROBABLY BE TURNED DOWN IF IT SHOULD EVER REACH LONDON AS A FORMAL PROPOSAL. ACTUALLY HE THOUGHT THERE WAS VERY LITTLE LIKELIHOOD IT EVER WOULD GET TO LONDON. WHATEVER CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES MAY BE PROPOSED WILL BE DISCUSSED LOCALLY BETWEEN THE HOUSE

OF ASSEMBLY AND THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE AND MY SOURCE DOUBTED THAT THE ELECTED GIBRALTAR GOVERNMENT WOULD PRESS FOR ANY CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT IT KNEW TO BE UNACCEPTABLE. HE EXPLAINED THAT THE DIFFICULTY WITH A CIVILIAN GOVERNOR FOR GIBRALTAR IS THE RELATIVELY LARGE BRITISH MILITARY PRESENCE ON THE ROCK AND PARTICULARLY THE PRESENCE OF ALL THREE MAJOR SERVICES. A "COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF" IS NEEDED IN THE GOVERNOR'S SEAT, HE SAID QUITE CANDIDLY, TO KEEP THINGS RUNNING SMOOTHLY.

10. THE ELECTIONS. WHATEVER POLITICAL JOCKEYING MAY BE GOING ON WITH RESPECT TO NEXT SUMMER'S ELECTIONS REMAINS VERY MUCH IN THE BACKGROUND. JOE BOSSANO, TGWU LEADER AND INDEPENDENT OPPOSITION MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY, HAS MADE NO PUBLIC MOVE TOWARD FORMING HIS OWN PARTY SINCE HIS SPLIT WITH THE INTEGRATION WITH GREAT BRITAIN PARTY. SOME THINK HE MAY NOT DO SO AND SIMPLY STAND AS AN INDEPENDENT. THE ODDS, HOWEVER, STILL FAVOR HIS FORMING A THIRD PARTY.

11. SIR JOSHUA HASSAN, CHIEF MINISTER AND LONG TIME POLITICAL LEADER OF GIBRALTAR, SAID HE WILL NOT MAKE HIS INTENTIONS KNOWN FOR THE TIME BEING, BUT ADDED THAT IF THE WAGE NEGOTIATIONS ARE SETTLED SOON, HE WILL PROBABLY RUN AGAIN. THE MOST IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION FOR SIR JOSHUA, HOWEVER, WILL NO DOUBT BE HIS CONFIDENTIAL

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ASSESSMENT OF HIS PROSPECTS IN WHAT MOST OBSERVERS FEEL WILL BE A THREE PARTY RACE.
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